



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW



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Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
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ABOUT US

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Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

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DPG WEST ASIA REVIEW

DPG West Asia Review contains major developments in West Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open source media. To subscribe please [click here](#).

Your comments and feedback can be addressed to Sanket Joshi at sanket@dpg.org.in.

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Abstract

On September 05, 2020 India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met his Iranian counterpart Brig. Gen. Amir Hatami in Tehran. Both leaders discussed regional security, including the situation in Afghanistan. India's Minister of State for External Affairs V. Muraleedharan held a discussion with Syria's Vice Foreign Minister, H.E. Faysal Mekdad on September 03. "India congratulated Syria on successful election to their People's Assembly and conveyed support for Syria's national reconstruction efforts and the well-being of its people".

On the economic front, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia hosted an Extraordinary Meeting (Virtual) of the G-20 Foreign Ministers on 'Strengthening International Cooperation Across Borders'. Ministers exchanged national experiences and lessons learned from their cross-border management experience in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Serbia and Muslim majority Kosovo normalised economic relations with Israel. While, the United States sanctioned 11 companies based in China, Iran and the United Arab Emirates, for enabling the sale and shipment of oil from the Islamic Republic of Iran. In a major development on energy front, Saudi Arabia's oil shipments to the United States plunged to a 35 year low.

On August 31, The United States vetoed a resolution in the United Nations that called for the prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration of detained ISIS terrorists and their families. The U.S. took this stance as the UN draft resolution did not demand countries to actively "repatriate" foreign fighters who joined Al-Qaeda and ISIS in West Asia to their domiciled countries. This comes in the backdrop of America's European and Arab allies refusing to take back ISIS fighters to their respective countries. In light of this, the U.S. CENTCOM Chief, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie warned about "potential resurgence of ISIS, if the international community fails to quickly repatriate and de-radicalise members and supporters of the terror group".

On the regional security front, French President Emmanuel Macron visited Iraq and discussed nuclear energy and expressed support for the Iraqi Prime Minister's push towards containing militant groups. Turkey warned the West, it will continue to buy air-defence weapons from other sources if the traditional western partners fail to deliver. In another major development, a report claims that the Israeli Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu privately consented to the sale of F-35 stealth aircraft to the UAE.

Links to major developments in West Asia of strategic relevance to India, compiled from open source media, can be found below.

Bahrain

[Bahrain to Allow Flights between Israel and UAE to Cross Its Airspace](#)

September 03, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

Flights between Israel and the United Arab Emirates will be able to fly over Bahrain after the kingdom on Thursday (September 03) said all services to and from the UAE can cross its airspace.

Egypt

[Egypt and UAE Discuss Eastern Mediterranean](#)

September 05, 2020, Arab News

With the escalation of tension between Egypt and Turkey, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry discussed with his Emirati counterpart Abdullah bin Zayed the latest developments in the Eastern Mediterranean.

[Egypt and China's Huawei Discuss Electricity Network's Transformation to Smart Grid](#)

September 03, 2020, Xinhua Net

Egypt and China's tech giant Huawei on Thursday (September 03) discussed the gradual transformation of Egypt's electricity network to a smart grid, Egyptian Ministry of Electricity and Renewable Energy said.

[Egypt's Foreign Minister Voices Support to Ceasefire, Formation of New Presidential Council in Libya in Meeting With EU's Borrell](#)

September 03, 2020, Egypt Today

Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry on Thursday (September 03) affirmed Egypt's support for a ceasefire in Libya, the formation of a new presidential council and a fair distribution of wealth, as he met with Josep Borrell, the European Union's high representative for foreign affairs.

Iraq

[BRI: Iraq Freezes Oil-for-Projects Deal With China: Report](#)

August 27, 2020, Zawya

Iraq has frozen a 20-year oil-for-projects agreement with China due to a financial and political crisis.

[US, Europeans Part Ways in UN over Repatriation of ISIS Detainees](#)

September 02, 2020, The Arab Weekly

The United States refused to back the resolution in the UN because it did not demand countries actively repatriate foreign fighters who travelled to the Middle East to join al-Qaeda and ISIS.

[French President Macron Talks Nuclear Energy and Ways to Control Militias During Iraq Visit](#)

September 02, 2020, The National

French President Emmanuel Macron in Baghdad on Wednesday (September 02) discussed solving Iraq's power problems with nuclear energy and expressed support for Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kadhimi's push to contain armed groups outside the control of the state.

[Iraqi Kurdistan Faces Water 'Catastrophe' as Iran Cuts off Rivers](#)

September 06, 2020, Middle East Eye

Iraqi Kurdistan has suffered its fair share of water crises over the decades, but experts warn that a catastrophe is now looming large as Iran blocks major water supplies from the region's two main rivers - the primary sources of livelihood for nearly two million people.

[Iraq Denies Report It Sought OPEC+ Cut Exemption](#)

September 03, 2020, Oilprice.com

Iraq is not seeking an exemption from the OPEC+ production cuts, the country's oil ministry said in a statement following a Reuters report that suggested OPEC's number-two was seeking relief from the deal for the first quarter of next year.

Iran

[India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh Discusses Bilateral Ties, Regional Security with Iranian Counterpart](#)

September 06, 2020, The Economic Times

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday (September 06) said he had a "very fruitful" meeting with his Iranian counterpart Brigadier General Amir Hatami and discussed ways to bolster bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on regional security issues, including the situation in Afghanistan.

[Iran's Friends Should Have Defied U.S. Sanctions During Pandemic: President Rouhani](#)

September 05, 2020, Reuters

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani castigated Iran's friends for not standing up to the United States and ignoring U.S. sanctions during the coronavirus pandemic.

[U.S. Sanctions 11 Companies It Says Have Enabled Sales, Shipments of Iranian Oil](#)

September 03, 2020, Radio Liberty

The Treasury Department said on September 3 the sanctions have been imposed on six companies based in Iran, the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.), and China.

Israel

[Serbia and Muslim Majority Kosovo Normalize Economic Ties with Israel](#)

September 05, 2020, NBC News

President Donald Trump announced Friday (September 04) that Serbia and Kosovo have normalized economic ties as part of the U.S - brokered talks that include Belgrade moving its Israeli embassy to Jerusalem; while, Israel and Kosovo agreeing to mutual recognition.

[Indian-American Physicians Call for US-Israel-India Dialogue on Covid-19](#)

September 05, 2020, The Jerusalem Post

The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) has suggested a health dialogue between India, Israel and the United States on ways to fight the spread of coronavirus and for the development of an efficient quality healthcare system.

[Hamas Says Deal Reached to End Escalation of Violence with Israel](#)

September 01, 2020, Al Jazeera

Hamas, the Palestinian group running the Gaza Strip, has announced it has reached a Qatari-mediated deal to end the latest escalation of violence with Israel.

[Israel-Saudi Arabia Normalisation is Question of When, Not if - Advisor to Bahraini Monarch](#)

September 03, 2020, Sputnik International

While Riyadh is interested in following in the footsteps of the United Arab Emirates and inking its own agreement with Israel, Rabbi Marc Schneier, who is close to many leaders in the Persian Gulf, says it will only happen after the US elections, and only if there is progress on the Palestinian front.

Jordan

[Egypt Sends Signal to Turkey by Deepening Ties With Jordan and Iraq](#)

September 05, 2020, AL-Monitor

A tripartite summit was held in Amman Aug. 25 between Egypt, Jordan and Iraq to develop a security, diplomatic and economic bloc, at a time when the three countries face accelerated regional threats and economic repercussions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Kuwait

[Oil Tanker Heading to India from Kuwait Catches Fire off Sri Lanka](#)

September 04, 2020, Khaleej Times

A fire broke out on a large oil tanker off the eastern coast of Sri Lanka on Thursday (September 03), leaving one of its 23 crew members missing and another injured, a navy spokesman said. Both were identified as Filipinos.

Lebanon

[Lebanon's PM-designate Vows Reforms, New IMF Talks](#)

August 31, 2020, France 24

Lebanese Prime Minister-designate Mustapha Adib on Monday (August 31) called for the formation of a new government in record time and the immediate implementation of reforms as an entry point for an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

[Over 4 Tonnes of Ammonium Nitrate Found Near Beirut Port in Lebanon](#)

September 03, 2020, Al Jazeera

Lebanon's army has found 4.35 tonnes of ammonium nitrate near the entrance to Beirut port, the site of a powerful explosion last month, caused by a large stockpile of the same highly explosive chemical that killed 191 people.

Oman

[Most Expat Women Employed in Oman Government Sector are Indians](#)

September 06, 2020, Gulf News

As per the 2020 Statistical Yearbook data from National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) Oman, the number of Indian women employed in the government sector topped the list with 4,604 followed by 3,090 Egyptian women for the year 2019.

[Oman's State Council Submits VAT Draft Law to His Majesty](#)

September 03, 2020, Times of Oman

The State Council forwarded to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the draft of value-added tax law (VAT) referred by the Council of Ministers as a matter of urgency, with the opinion of the two Councils.

Qatar

[Qatar Airways to Operate Flights to 11 Indian Cities for Limited Period](#)

September 06, 2020, The Peninsula Qatar

Qatar Airways will operate 'special flights' between Doha and 11 destinations in India from September 6 to October 24, 2020.

Saudi Arabia

[Mecca Grand Muftis Sermon Points towards Possible Saudi Normalisation of Relations with Israel](#)

September 06, 2020, Middle East Eye

A sermon by Abdulrahman al-Sudais, the imam of the Grand Mosque of Mecca, has caused a stir on social media after it was interpreted by some as a prelude to Saudi normalisation with Israel.

[Saudi Arabia Cuts Oil Prices as Coronavirus Continues To Sap Energy Demand](#)

September 06, 2020, Livemint

The kingdom's state producer, Saudi Aramco, reduced its key Arab Light grade of crude by a larger-than-expected amount for shipments to Asia.

[G-20 Ministers Stress Importance of Opening Borders to Stimulate Economy](#)

September 03, 2020, Arab News

G-20 foreign ministers stressed the importance of opening borders to stimulate economies, the Saudi foreign ministry said on Thursday (September 03).

[Saudi Oil Shipments to America Plunge to 35-year Low](#)

September 01, 2020, CNN International

Saudi Arabia drew the wrath of Republicans in Washington this spring by sending an armada of tankers to America to drown the U.S. with cheap crude. Now, the kingdom has reversed course, steering the fewest barrels to the U.S. since the Reagan era.

Syria

[India Supports Syria's National Reconstruction Efforts: V Muraleedharan](#)

September 04, 2020, Yahoo News

India's Minister of State for External Affairs V Muraleedharan held a discussion with Vice Foreign Minister of Syria, HE Faysal Mekdad, at the India-Syria Ministerial Consultations on Thursday (September 03). During the meeting, Muraleedharan conveyed India's support for Syria's national reconstruction efforts.

[Israel Launches Airstrikes on Strategic T-4 Airbase in Syria](#)

September 02, 2020, Al-Monitor

Syria's government said its air defenses responded to Israeli airstrikes targeting the T4 air base in Syria's Homs desert.

Turkey

[Erdogan Raises Rhetoric in Greece Standoff in East Mediterranean](#)

September 05, 2020, Al Jazeera

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned Greece to enter talks over disputed Eastern Mediterranean territorial claims or face the consequences.

[NATO Says Greece, Turkey Set for 'Technical Talks' on Mediterranean Tension](#)

September 04, 2020, Al Jazeera

NATO says alliance members Turkey and Greece have agreed to hold "technical talks" on ways to de-escalate military tensions in the eastern Mediterranean Sea over disputed gas exploration activities.

[Turkey Warns the West It Will Continue to Shop Around for Missiles](#)

September 04, 2020, Bloomberg

Turkey said it would continue to turn to other providers of air-defence weapons if traditional western allies fail to deliver, suggesting the rancour prompted by Ankara's decision to buy Russian missiles may be repeated.

[Turkey-India Business Council Inks Goodwill Deal to Facilitate Trade](#)

September 01, 2020, Daily Sabah

The Turkey-India Business Council of Turkey's Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) has signed a goodwill agreement with Dubai-based Emirates NBD Bank in a bid to further facilitate and develop trade and investment relations between the two nations.

UAE

[Israeli PM Netanyahu Secretly Okayed F-35 Sale to UAE, Report Claims](#)

September 04, 2020, Times of Israel

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has privately removed any opposition to the sale of American F-35 fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates, despite repeated assurances that he is against the deal, according to a New York Times report.

[Iran's Khamenei Says UAE 'Betrayed' Muslim World with Israel Deal](#)

September 01, 2020, Al Jazeera

The United Arab Emirates betrayed the Islamic world and the Palestinians by reaching a deal towards normalising ties with Israel, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a speech.

Yemen

[Yemen's President Orders Troops to Foil Houthi Attacks on Marib](#)

September 05, 2020, Arab News

The Yemeni President said that the Houthis had dispatched thousands of "deceived" fighters to Marib and other contested areas, fueling a war that only served the agendas of their masters in Tehran.



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